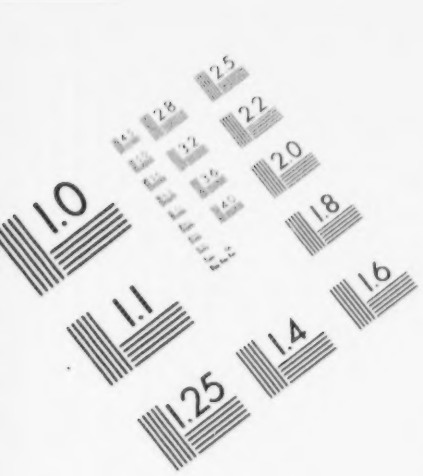

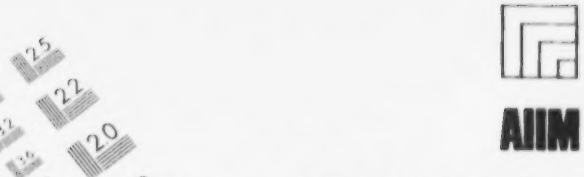

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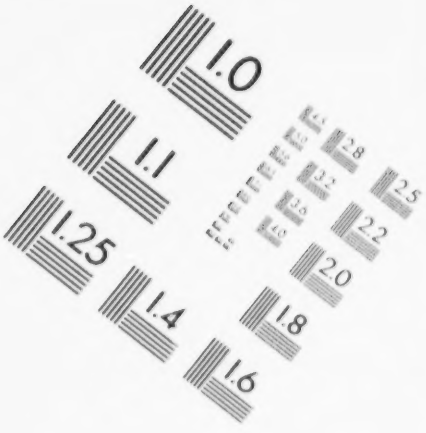

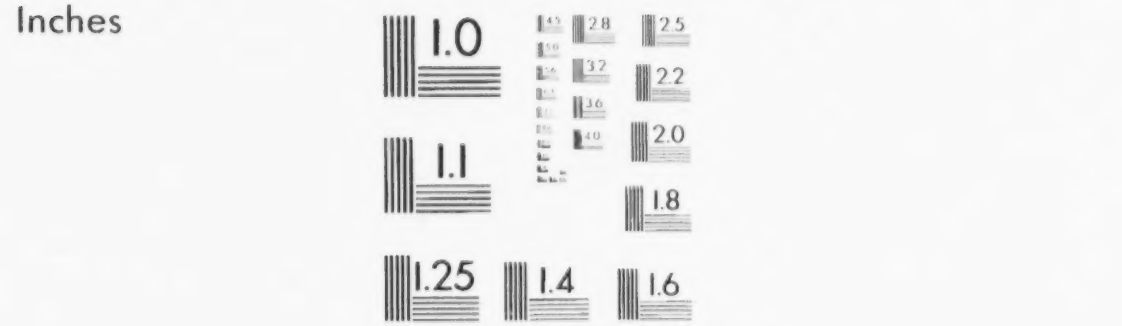

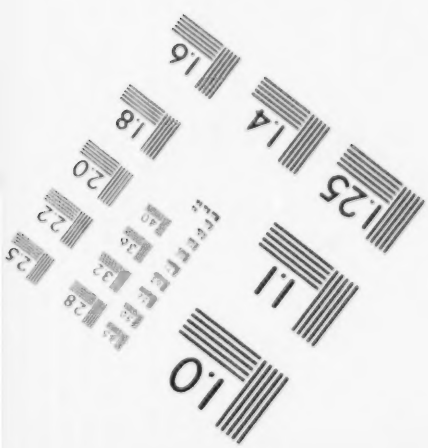

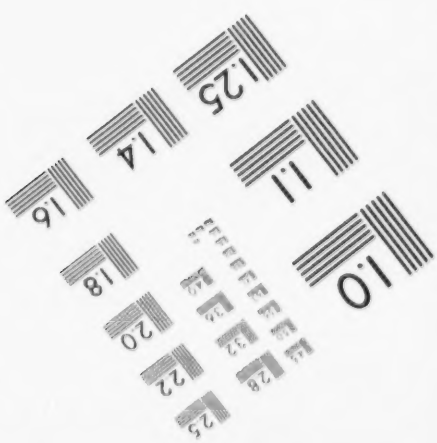

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how two "American Dream" courses were created--one was a senior seminar in Fall 2001 that developed after the tragic events of that September and the other, its offspring, was a Fall 2002 class in the American Novel, which was planned deliberately. The paper first looks at how 9/11 changed the senior seminar by reversing the instructor/author's original plans to stress history over theme, and second, how he was able to use what he learned from the unexpected changes in the seminar to give new direction to an existing American Novel course. It describes mainly the course ideas he retained from the modified seminar and how they produced last semester's class. Along the way, the paper offers some ideas about how to introduce the American Dream theme into existing classes, thus avoiding the administrative problems of creating a new course to investigate this theme which has gained added relevance from the events of recent months. A detailed syllabus is attached. (NKA)

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Revisiting the American Dream in Fiction: Developing a Thematic Course.

by Gerald Siegel

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Revisiting The American Dream in Fiction: Developing a Thematic Course
Gerald Siegel, York College of Pennsylvania
Presented Nov. 23, 2002 at annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English
(Revised 12 July 2003)

Curriculum development need not always be the result of advance planning or of hewing carefully to a narrow interpretation of an existing course. I've found that sometimes the best course ideas happen *despite* my plans; that's what happened to create the two American Dream courses I'll describe for you today--both a senior seminar in Fall, 2001, that developed after the tragic events of that September and its offspring, a Fall, 2002, class in the American Novel, which I planned deliberately. Both were outgrowths of the country's 2001 experiences. We'll look first at how 9/11 changed the senior seminar by reversing my original plans to stress history over theme and, second, how I was able to use what I learned from the unexpected changes in the seminar to give new direction to an existing American Novel course. I'll describe mainly course ideas I retained from the modified seminar and how they produced last semester's class. Along the way, I hope to give you some ideas about how to introduce the American Dream theme into existing classes, thus avoiding the administrative problems of creating a new course to investigate this theme which has gained added relevance from the events of recent months.

In that earlier seminar, I changed the course to meet student interests. My section of this capstone course was originally going to attempt to modify slightly a traditional historical and genre study of American realism through what I had envisioned as a supplementary thematic response to the new millennium, a sort of glance backward to the 20th century from the 21st as we concentrated mainly on realistic fiction since 1885. The planned changes for 2001 were intended to add to some of the standard works an occasional look at the "American Dream." But the course gained frighteningly sudden new relevance after the September 11th, when student

reactions transformed this minor spin into the center of the course.

Most obviously, the students' responses to the theme and events I've mentioned meant that, while we did achieve the objectives I'd planned for the course, the emphases of the course shifted heavily toward theme and reader response. Part of the fun of teaching the course lay in my adapting to these interests; knowing the materials did not mean that I could predict what was going to happen in any given class session. (The adaptations subsequently became part of the novel course.)

An opening session I provided on backgrounds of the American dream motif became a more relevant tie-in than I had originally expected. I tried to provide my own narrative in personal terms, drawing upon my experiences as a grandchild of immigrants and as a Fulbright lecturer in two European countries; I think the personal sharing was more important in motivating students than the particular experiences; I hoped that my personal remarks might empower some of the students to draw upon *their* life experiences for the symposia that would follow.

I also talked a bit about origins of the motif in American writing, starting with Franklin=s *Autobiography* and going on to two later items: Russell Conwell's inspirational lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," and the novels of Horatio Alger. (These early comments were later reinforced in the seminar by more work on AlgerBa student report and a guest lecture on Alger and popular culture of the fin de siecle by Michael Moon of Johns Hopkins University.) Two particular Alger works to consider for class use are the early *Ragged Dick, or Street Life in New York* and *Bound to Rise, or Up the Ladder*. (I found these and other works discussed in the Horatio Alger Society web site and available on line at the University of Virginia's electronic text collection.) This

opening session led to a student symposium on the "American Dream" topic.

Next, I'd like to take a look at what the *students* did in the course. Appropriately enough for the seminar, student participation was very important--I even developed a rubric to explain how I'd evaluate that participation. (There is a sample rubric in the expanded syllabus.) When the seminar evolved into the novel course, this stress on participation remained, along with two other techniques I used: discussion questions to encourage directed reading and response essays (done at the start of selected class sessions) to foster and guide the participation. (Of course, response essays are a good way of ensuring that students complete the assigned readings and are *ready* to participate in the class sessions without having to resort to quizzes or frequent tests.)

I found the discussion questions useful in several ways. I could, of course, have students write about them, and in both seminar and novel course I adapted parts of these questions for some of the response essays. For the most part, they provide a starting point for in-class analyses of the readings, although I generally go beyond the limits of these questions. Of course, the questions are also useful for guiding overall reading, and they could be used for general writing assignments, something I've not chosen not to do. In the seminar, especially early in that semester, the questions focused rather heavily upon knowledge of the work and upon the evolution of realist and naturalist novels; in the American Novel course each set of questions included items related to the American Dream theme.

Computer applications have been pretty much limited, since both the seminar and the novel course have been taught in conventional classrooms Nevertheless, I've tried to incorporate some technology into the courses, most obviously through electronic sources. I used our library's electronic texts and journal sources, including JSTOR full text articles. In addition, as I

mentioned earlier, I used on line sources for report materials--the University of Virginia collection I've already noted, the Gutenberg Project, and the University of Pennsylvania guide to electronic texts among others. In addition to using computer applications for research, I employed IT for reacting to drafts of student papers, highlighting and commenting on e-mailed drafts using the Microsoft Word review function. In addition, partly because of the class make-up (not all senior majors), I've used some video material, primarily biographical, with this course, and we've been able to talk about how the media presentations add to our understanding of the works.

The second meeting of last year's seminar--the student symposium—was originally conceived as a relatively minor motivational activity, but turned out to be one of the most important classes. It built on my opening statements, and it received added emphasis when the next session, September 11, was replaced by an hour in which we joined a near-by political science class and watched the events in New York, Washington, and western Pennsylvania unfold.

For the symposium itself, students were asked to prepare to talk for a few minutes about *their* views as to whether there was an American dream (a few thought it was mainly apparent to immigrants and foreigners) and, if one existed, how they viewed it. Their answers provided starting points for much of our discussion as the class progressed, and also influenced my choices of discussion questions and response essay topics.

Unsurprisingly, most students did see the dream in terms of material success--but they generally did not equate success with wealth or fame, seeing it instead more in terms of financial security and a better future for succeeding generations. There were doubts too--about whether

their generation would find that more secure future and about access to the dream for women and minorities. I was surprised by the fact that only a few found themselves close to the immigrant experience, but not by their responses in general. As we went through the course, these same attitudes colored their responses to the works of the course. For example, most recognized the moral rise that accompanied Silas Lapham's financial decline, but a number said, in one of the response essays, that Lapham may have been better off economically at the end of the novel because he had relative financial security and was back in a society where he belonged..

In other ways, the seminar did remain unchanged despite the thematic shifts. Students prepared research-based projects and papers, and did conference-style panels. These longer assignments remained outside of the American Dream motif. Majors papers included, for example, one on "Hurstwood's Isolation in *Sister Carrie,"* a study of gender roles, in particular the notion of "manliness" in the work, and another on "Edith Wharton and *Old* New York Society: A Love-Hate Relationship."

Overall, I considered the seminar a success, and positive student evaluations supported that judgment. Moreover, students who were not seniors expressed interest in a regular course offering on the American Dream motif.

I followed up on their suggestion this past fall with our American Novel course. I still needed to think creatively: developing a new offering could take over a year because of the course approval process, so I began once again with an existing class. Apart from repeating two texts that had worked especially well in the seminar, I built the modified course partly from ideas I learned from that seminar experience and used now to incorporate students' post-9/11 sensitivity toward examination of American values. As for the text choices, because I was

building my readings specifically for this course rather than adapting an existing list, I was able to create a range including both canonical and non-canonical items. This range of texts encouraged students to go beyond historical and genre analyses and use a spectrum of critical approaches in engaging those texts

Possibly the most important modification I tried was expanding the use of the symposium, which I employed as a major course element from the very outset of the American Novel class With more students (eighteen in the course compared with twelve in the seminar), I was also able to expand the scope of the activity to add a second symposium. The first, like the one used in the seminar, interrogated the nature of the American dream, and the second focused instead on perceptions of the values behind the dream. I also specifically encouraged students to go beyond their personal opinions and interview others in preparing those remarks. I also asked students to prepare a written statement for me in addition to the oral comments. I incorporated ideas from these symposia into the discussion questions for the course and also worked these ideas into our general consideration of the works. I've also tried to include at least one question related to the ideas from the symposia into our tests. (Summaries of student symposium responses are included in the expanded syllabus.)

The numerous researched essays of the seminar I replaced with just two for each student in the novel course. The more literary of these was a summary and analysis of a professional article related to one of the required readings. This essay was accompanied by an oral report on the article; these have in almost all cases added to our understanding of the works and led to engaged discussion, more than meeting the spirit of a course in the novel and serving as a springboard for the discussion questions. The second, more extensive paper was one of a group

of studies of novels that explored the theme of the American dream; this group is also listed in the extended syllabus. It's here that the course gained breadth and the students began to view the course theme from a range of perspectives. Again, an oral report accompanied each paper, and those reports led to enthusiastic discussion.

In the American Novel class, as in the seminar, students completed brief comments after their reading of the assigned works. Most of these response essays were done in class, but a few were take home essays, and I ended the semester with an out-of-class written assignment that brought together several of the required works. (Topics for both sample response essays and the final paper are included in the expanded syllabus.) I also slightly increased the amount of video over that of the seminar and tied those materials into the other course activities. Media presentations included both filmed versions of selected works and biographical and critical programs. Because this course was at a junior level and included both majors and non-majors, I did also include some more conventional techniques, such as providing brief background lectures on authors, works, and literary concepts and including three tests as part of assessment.

Overall, while the class did involve a fairly large amount of work, students reacted well both to the rigor and the materials, according to post-course evaluations. They also expressed appreciation for the emphasis on the American Dream motif, thus confirming the interest that led me to develop this version of the course. There were both general comments about the class as thought-provoking, and more specific ones, such as this: "It made me think about things I would not have recognized previously. Now, I see the American dream and its facets everywhere and I bring it up in other classes." Another described the course as "both educational and entertaining" and expressed approval of the use of study guides for each work.. A third student thought the

article reviews were "a great help in understanding the texts."

I really enjoyed this course and its student involvement and find myself thinking about when, not if, I will offer it again. And I find I'm thinking about new directions for at least some of the works. Maybe next time I'll include more on immigrants, legal and otherwise, or on a new range of communities who have participated in or been excluded from the American Dream. One student evaluation, for example, suggested that I include a work by a Hispanic author, and I'm seriously thinking about possibilities. Another option might be going beyond the novel--short fiction, drama, and non-fiction all could be workable perspectives. But starting with a course that already exists will still be an important starting point for any such curricular innovation, and I plan to keep the present course as simply one variation on our American Novel offering.

Appendix 1: Syllabus LIT313 American Novel
Expanded version (Rev. 12 July 2003)
Dr. G. Siegel Fall 2002

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Scope of the Course

This course examines aspects of the thematic concerns, development, social-historical contexts, and generic qualities of the American novel. For Fall, 2002, the emphasis will be upon novels of the twentieth century concerned in various ways with the topic of "The American Dream."

Objectives of the Course

1. Through detailed examination of selected works, to develop a familiarity with significant works of realistic and naturalistic twentieth-century American fiction and its treatment of the American Dream concept..

2. To encourage a sense of the nature of the American dream based in part on student perceptions of this concept and in part on examination of a group of related works dealing with the topic, and to use the attributes thus identified as part of the critical response to the assigned works. A special concern will be the ways in which concepts of the dream may have changed since the events of September 11, 2001.

3. To encourage mature critical evaluation of these works through discussion of the readings and through the insights and research of class members.

3. To encourage careful, intelligent reading, critical thinking, and effective written and oral communication, and to allow participants to express and share insights with their colleagues through both spoken and written presentations.

4.To enhance student knowledge of and appreciation for the social, philosophical, aesthetic, and historical dimensions of literature.

Methods

The course will emphasize informed discussion of readings. Class participants will make the main contribution to course content by sharing their reading experiences, insights, and research with one another during class the seminar meetings. This will be supplemented as appropriate by background lectures and commentary as well as student presentations. Other methods may include audio-visual presentations, student-professor conferences on both readings and written projects, field trips, guest speakers, and attendance at department and/or college cultural presentations. Assignments, content, and methods may be changed at the instructor's discretion.

Assessment

The course grade will be based upon the following items, all five of which are weighted equally:
1. A major student presentation and paper about an additional work related to the course theme.
2. Three tests.
3. A class involvement grade, which includes a combination of written items and participation:
   Oral/written report on a professional article or chapter from a professional book (counts double)

Class participation and preparedness.(counts double). Attendance matters. To participate, one must be in class regularly and be prepared consistently; failure to do either will naturally have a major effect upon this portion of the grade. All students are allowed two personal days (which I assume will be used for such reasons as serious illness, death in the immediate family, personal or family emergencies, religious holidays, etc.) You **are** still responsible for any work done in class, and you must arrange **in advance** for any special arrangements for response essays, quizzes, etc. **Tests and papers/presentations are normally required on the listed dates**.

Brief (1 p.) response essays and/or quizzes on the assigned readings and other class material, and a possible final short essay.

Course Materials

Cather, Willa. *My Antonia* (Dover).
Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man* (Vintage).
Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars*. (Vintage).
Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. (Penguin Putnam).
Updike, John. *Rabbit Is Rich*. (Fawcett Crest).
Wharton, Edith. *The Age of Innocence*. (Dover).
A research handbook or guide to use of MLA style (such as *The Everyday Writer*, used in York College's English Composition program) is recommended.

Communication Standards:

1. York College recognizes the importance of effective communication in all disciplines and careers. Therefore students are expected to competently analyze, synthesize, organize, and articulate course material in papers, examinations, and presentations. In addition, students should know and use communication skills current to their field of study, recognize the need for revision as part of their writing process, and employ standard conventions of English usage in both writing and speaking. Students may be asked to further revise assignments that do not demonstrate effective use of these communication skills.

2. All papers must use correct MLA documentation and format. Students needing help with documentation or writing may obtain assistance from the instructor and/or from the Learning Resource Center but are ultimately responsible themselves for the quality of any written work they submit.

3. All final drafts submitted must be typed or done on a word processor (and of letter quality). (Students unfamiliar with word processing should consider taking the workshops provided by the Academic Computer Center. Documentation must be complete and in MLA format. It's a good idea to keep a personal file copy, either typed or on disk, of any assignments submitted. Assistance with documentation and writing is available through the instructor, the writing consultants at the Learning Resource Center, or the Schmidt Library home page.

Academic Honesty

The York College of Pennsylvania policy on academic honesty appears in the student handbook and in the college catalog. Academic dishonesty may result in a penalty of a grade of "0" in the course and notification of the Dean of Academic Affairs.

1. **Schedule.** In this course like this, the participants rather than the professor will often be the center of learning. For this reason, it's important that you attend, are prepared, and participate actively.

8/27 Introductory remarks. Overview of course. Sign up for a symposium session. Late entrants will automatically be assigned to symposium #2. You'll probably need to do some preliminary general source reading to make your topic choices for all your projects. Choices for professional article reports must be made by Aug. 29 for Cather items (to be presented 9/5) and by Sept. 5 for all other topics. Choices for major report topics must be made by Sept.19.

8/29 Symposium #1: "The American Dream." Have written for today: some brief notes to guide you in explaining your view of just what constitutes the American dream. Turn in a 1-2 paragraph written summary at the next class. You may wish to talk with others--friends and family, native-born citizens and those from other lands--to get ideas for your 3-5 minutes of comments

9/3 Cather: *My Antonia*.

9/5 Cather: *My Antonia*. Student reports on relevant articles.

9/10 Complete *My Antonia*. Symposium #2: American Values. (What seem to be America's values and where/how are these values displayed? What place do these values have in the American dream? Have these values changed since 9/11/2001, and if so, how? Again, you may want to speak with others, both those born in the U.S. and those born elsewhere.)

9/12 Wharton: *The Age of Innocence*.

9/17 Wharton: *The Age of Innocence*. Student reports on relevant articles.

9/19 Wharton: *The Age of Innocence*.

9/24 Test #1.

9/26 Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*. Student reports on relevant articles.

10/1 Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*.

10/3 Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*.

10/8 Mid-semester reports on related works. (Written versions will be due by 10/17.)

10/10 Conferences and work on written report versions for mid-semester reports.

10/15 No class--Fall Break.

10/17 Mid-semester reports on related works. (Written versions will be due today.)

10/22 Ellison: *Invisible Man*. Student reports on relevant articles.

10/24 Ellison: *Invisible Man*.

10/29 Ellison: *Invisible Man*.

10/31 Test #2.

11/5 Updike: *Rabbit Is Rich*. Student reports on relevant articles.

11/7 Updike: *Rabbit Is Rich*.

11/12 Updike: *Rabbit Is Rich*.

11/14 Guterson: *Snow Falling on Cedars*. Student reports on relevant articles.

11/19 Guterson: *Snow Falling on Cedars*.
11/21 Class begins 8:00 a.m. Conferences and work on written report versions for semester-end reports.

11/26 Guterson: *Snow Falling on Cedars*.
11/28 No classBThanksgiving Break.

12/3 Test #3.
12/5 Semester-end reports on related works. (Written versions will be due by 12/10.)

12/10 Semester-end reports on related works. (Written versions will be due today.)

2. **Assignments**.

2.1 **Assigned readings. These should be completed by the start of the first class at which a given work is scheduled for discussion**. Expect to be asked to write a brief response essay about the assigned work at randomly selected sessions.

2.2 **Report on a relevant professional article.** (This may also include chapters from selected professional books or essays from collections.) This consists of a 5-8 minute oral presentation and a written report as explained below.

$ Examine carefully an article from a professional journal or other approved source which adds to our understanding of one of the assigned works. Choose an article which is related to the selected work or author and in some way to the course theme and/or the development of the American novel. You will be receiving a list of some suggested articles; clear all others with me before doing the report. No more than five articles may be selected on any one author.

$ Your heading will be a complete bibliographic citation for the article, which must be from a print or full-text on-line journal (or an approved book source, as explained above.) To begin, summarize the article. Remember that your audience is your class. Do not just repeat the abstract if one is published with the article (although you will need to attach a copy of the title page and, if available, the printed abstract or summary, to the back of your written report). Describe the topic and coverage of the article and, if appropriate, how to use the work, and note situations for which the work might seem especially useful.

$ The major part of the report will be analysis of and response to the article. What are the main ideas we should know? How does it relate to the thematic and genre concerns of this course? If you agree or disagree with points made by the article, explain and support your case. (For example, if an article calls May Welland "vacuous," as does one critique of *The Age of Innocence*, is its contention adequately supported? Notice this is **not** the same as asking you whether you simply agree or disagree; you **do** need to be specific and professional in making your case.)

$ Comment about the work's level of difficulty (easy? Undergraduate? Advanced undergraduate? Graduate level? Clear only to experts in the field?). What led you to make this judgment? With your oral report or by the next session, submit in multiple copies (two for me and one for each class member) a one page typed report summarizing your findings. I'll retain a copy of this report.

(Copies for colleagues may be provided on-line.) For on-line full-text journals, provide relevant accessing and use information as well. Indicate if the on-line version is full-text.

2.3 **Critical paper. A 6-10 page critical research paper and oral report on a work related to the course theme.** YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR PORTION OF THE CLASS LESSON ON THE DAYS ON WHICH YOU REPORT. This is a critical research report on a novel you have not previously read that is related to the theme and genre of this course. You will be given a list of novels from which to select. These reports will provide the background for our understanding and discussion of a range of related works. Oral presentations based upon these reports are scheduled for October 8 and 17 and for December 5-10; proposals that accompany these papers are due at least two weeks before the oral presentations; last dates to submit written versions are listed on the schedule. Your oral report should take about 10 minutes, which may include the use of discussion questions and/or visual aids. Use **correct MLA form and practice** for documenting this report and all the following reports.

Your reports should deal with the following topics:

a. a **very short** biography of the author that mentions major works and literary accomplishments, focuses on his/her relation to the contemporaneous literary scene and the concerns and values of American society at that time, and/or demonstrates the author's significance to the development of realistic writing in America. Go beyond a general "encyclopedia" style bio sketch; focus your biography..
b. a plot summary of the work.
c. a discussion of the novel on at least two levels:

$ its relation to the American dream theme and to American values, both of today and of the work's period. Remember the concepts we developed in our symposia. Be sure to use informed criticism based upon professional sources, not simply unsupported opinion.

$ its place in the development of American fiction as an evolving genre and in relation to realistic and naturalistic fiction.

READ THE WORK ITSELF, of course, **AND ALSO** use at least 3-5 secondary sources to make your critical points. You may find useful both general sources on the author's work and specific sources (possibly journal articles, which may include those reported on by colleagues) that look at the particular aspect you are examining. In addition to these, reputable, valid on-line or internet sources may also be used. Check with me if you need advice on using any source. **All sources used should be appropriate for an undergraduate college course.** While works like *Cliff's Notes*, the *World Book* encyclopedia, or *Encarta* may provide helpful personal background for some of you, they are inappropriate as major sources. You probably **won't** find many useful sources through general indexes like the Reader's *Guide*, and sources like *Academic ASAP* may provide only limited help. Your personal responses alone to a work, however valid they may be, will not be enough for this project.

You'll receive a separate list of potentially useful sources. You may find journal articles more useful than entire books. You may wish to use other periodicals, such as the *New York Times* and its index. The annual *MLA Bibliography*, available both in print and on-line, is an excellent source, as is the annual collection of bibliographic essays *American Literary Scholarship*.. Useful books and sources of bibliography also include *Eight American Authors*, *Sixteen Modern American Authors*, *American Literature* (a quarterly), Hart, the works by Leary, and the LHUS (Ludwig's and Spiller's books).

I suggest that you present your talk from notes and/or overhead transparencies, supplemented as appropriate by audio-visual aids (i.e., handouts, presentation graphics, video). Few people can read a paper *verbatim* to a group really well, and delivering a memorized paper isn't practical in most instances.

2.4 **Proposals.** Before you go on to complete your long research paper, you must have approved by me a one-page typed proposal for your research. As a minimum, the proposal may be a 3-4 paragraph memorandum to me which should indicate 1.Exactly what your focus will be--what you expect to do with your topic, such as the type of information you want to find and the approach you plan to take, 2. where you expect to seek that information (bibliographic starting points, primary readings, on-line resources, and, if you know them already, books, articles, interviews, primary research, etc, and 3. a projected timetable for completion of the various stages of your individual project (bibliographic search, research and notes, writing, revision). This proposal will be evaluated S/U, but will also figure into a ten-point subjective assessment item on the project grade. It is due **at least** 2 weeks before your report date.

2.5 **Follow correct MLA practice and format for documentation as taught in WRT101/200 at York College. All quotation must be indicated appropriately; paraphrases should be rendered correctly, not as mangled quotations. Include a Works Cited with each paper..** Your course work up to this point should have prepared you thoroughly for research procedures, appropriate documentation, and paraphrase and quotation practices. If you have research questions, of course, the writing consultants at the Learning Resource Center are available to help, and I'll try to deal, both in class and in student-teacher conferences, with research questions. You can also access basic style guide information on-line through the Schmidt Library home page. In addition, you'll be expected to maintain a clear, interesting style even though you may be working with secondary material. Be ready to provide copies of your sources should I ask to see them. You may return the works to the library; just be able to access them if necessary. Be sure to keep a back-up copy (on disk or in hard copy) of any paper you submit.) I reserve the right to ask you to submit hard copy versions of sources and on-disk copies of your papers and drafts.

2.6 **Class participation**. This will be assessed on the bases of evidence of your consistency of preparation, the value of your contributions to the class in discussions of works and writers, your essay responses to assigned works, and the value and professionalism of your oral presentations. Your discussion of the assigned works is a major factor in my assessment of your participation and important to the learning experience of everyone else in the course. From time to time, you may be asked to write brief impromptu essay comments about an assigned work or about background material. For these reasons, **read and be ready to discuss assigned works by the first date shown for each work**. As mentioned earlier in the syllabus, absences affect participation, of course. Although I recommend attending every session, you may miss two classes without affecting your grade; otherwise, expect your participation grade to drop for each excess absence. Part of professionalism is being absent only for appropriate reasons. Religious holidays, serious illness, and death in the immediate family are appropriate reasons for absences; elective medical or dental appointments, rides leaving early, and oversleeping are not. If you must unavoidably be absent, arrange to have another class member inform you of what took place at that particular session. It's a good idea to exchange telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses with colleagues so that you can reach one another if necessary.

2.7 **Emergency notification.** If I need to contact the entire class, I=ll e-mail everyone through a mailing list that uses official York College e-mail addresses (yourname@ycp.edu). I=ll also use this list and YCP roster telephone numbers to reach individuals. Be sure to sign up with the academic computer center so that you can use this e-mail address. To reach me, use the e-mail address and telephone numbers on this syllabus, or leave a message with Ms. Sandra Coy Diener, department secretary, at (815)-1349.

3. Major Presentation Possible Topics

Some of these works may be available on-line or as e-texts, either through the Schmidt Library or through other electronic collections, such as that of the University of Virginia (http;//etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin). *indicates other works by this author may be acceptable.

Alger, Horatio Bound to Rise, Or, Up the Ladder or Paul the Peddler; or the Fortunes of a Young Street Merchant*
Anderson, Sherwood. Winesburg, Ohio*
Baldwin, James Go Tell It on the Mountain or Another Country
Bellamy, Edward. Looking Backward
Bellow, Saul. The Adventures of Augie March
Caldwell, Erskine. Tobacco Road or God's Little Acre
Carnegie, Andrew. The Gospel of Wealth
Churchill, Winston. The Dwelling-Place of Light
Cisneros, Sandra. House on Mango Street
Clark, Walter Van Tilburg. The Ox-Bow Incident
Conwell, Russell. Acres of Diamonds
Crane, Stephen. Maggie, a Girl of the Streets
Deland, Margaret. Old Chester Tales
Dos Passos, John. The 42nd Parallel or 1919 or The Big Money*
Dreiser, Theodore. An American Tragedy*
Farrell, James T. Young Lonigan or The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan or Judgment Day
Gaines, Ernest. A Lesson Before Dying
Garland, Hamlin. A Son of the Middle Border or Main Traveled Roads
Giman, Charlotte Perkins. Herland
Glasgow, Ellen. Barren Ground*
Gold, Michael. Jews Without Money
Hobson, Laura. Gentleman's Agreement
Howe, E.W. The Story of a Country Town
Howells, William Dean. A Traveler from Altruria or A Hazard of New Fortunes
Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes were Watching God
Irving, John. The World According to Garp
Kerouac, Jack. On the Road
Kingston, Maxine Hong. Woman Warrior*
Lewis, Sinclair. Babbitt*
Malamud, Bernard. The Assistant
Morrison, Toni. Song of Solomon
O=Hara, John. Appointment in Samarra*
Potok, Chaim. The Chosen
Price, Richard. Bloodbrothers or The Wanderers
Rolvaag, Ole. Giants in the Earth
Roth, Phillip. Goodbye, Columbus or Portnoy's Complaint*
Santayana, George. The Last Puritan
Sinclair, Upton. The Jungle
Tan, Amy. The Joy Luck Club*
Toomer, Jean. Cane
Tyler, Ann. St. Maybe or Ladder of Years
Viramontes, Helena Maria. The Moths and Other Stories
Voorse,, Mary Heaton. Strike
Warren, Robert Penn. All the King's Men
Westcott, Edward Noyes. David Harum

Wright, Richard Native Son*

4. Reference Sources You May Find Useful

Here is a list of handy starting points for research. You'll probably find a quick biography and possibly bibliographic references in *Dictionary of American Biography* (for earlier authors) or *Contemporary Authors* (online or in printBfor more recent writers). The following works are not all available in Schmidt Library, but may be accessed in electronic form or at other institutions. *If you find a more recent edition, use that one. Good starting points for individual authors are the books in the Prentice-Hall Twentieth Century Views or New Century Views series and the literary biographies in the Twayne United States Authors series.

Ahnebrink, Lars. Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction.
Baker, Houston A., Jr. Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance.
Beach, J.W. American Fiction; 1920-1940.
Bell, Bernard W. The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition. (1988).
Biblowitz, Iris, ed. Women and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Women Writers. (latest ed.)
Brooks, Van Wyck. The Confident Years: 1885-1915.
Brooks, Van Wyck. New England: Indian Summer, 1865-1915.
Bryer, J. R. Sixteen Modern American Authors.
Buell, Lawrence. New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance.
Chabot, C. Barry. Writers to the Nation: American Literary Modernism.
Cooke, Michael G. Afro-American Literature in the Twentieth Century. (1985).
Contemporary Authors. A series; examine several volumes. Or see on-line version.
Contemporary Authors: Bibliographical Series. 1986- . Different from the previous listing.
Cowie, Alexander. The Rise of the American Novel.
Curley, Dorothy Nyren, ed. Modern American Literature..
Duke, Maurice, and others. American Women Writers: Bibliographical Essays.
Elliott, Emory, ed. The Columbia Literary History of the United States (1988)*.
Elliott, Emory, ed. Columbia History of the American Novel (1991)*.
Fetterly, Judith. The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction.
Fiedler, Leslie. Love and Death in the American Novel.
Frohock, W. M. The Novel of Violence in America, rev. ed.
Frye, Northrop, Sheridan Baker and George Perkins. The Harper Handbook to Literature.
Gates, Henry Louis. Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the Racial Self.
Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century.
Gohdes, Clarence, and Sanford Marovitz. Bibliographical Guide to the Study of the Literature of the U.S.A., 5th ed. (1984)* or use most recent edition.
Handlin, Oscar and others. Harvard Guide to American History
Harner, James L. Literary Research Guide: A Guide to Reference Sources for the Study of Literatures in English and Related Topics, 2nd ed. (1993)*.
Harris, Laurie Lanzen. Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism.
Hart, J.D. The Oxford Companion to American Literature.
Hassan, Ihab. Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel. (1961).
Hassan, Ihab. Contemporary American Literature, 1945-1972.
Hoffman, Daniel. Harvard Guide to Contemporary Writing.
Inge, M. Thomas. Handbook of American Popular Culture. 3 vols.
Inge, M. Thomas and others. Black American Writers: Bibliographical Essays, 2 vols.
Kaplan, Amy. Social Construction of American Realism. (1988)
Kazin, Alfred D. On Native Grounds.
Koster, Donald L. American Literature and Language: A Guide to Information Sources. (1982)*.
Leary, Lewis. American Literature: A Study and Research Guide.

Leary, Lewis, ed. Articles on American Literature, 1900-1950. (1954). Also available for 1950-1967 (1970) and 1968-75 (1979).
Library of Congress Guide to the Study of the United States.
Ludwig, Richard M. Bibliographical Supplement, Literary History of the United States, 4th ed., rev.
Margolies, Edward. Native Sons: A Critical Study of Twentieth-Century Negro American Authors.
Magill, Frank, ed. Survey of Contemporary Literature.
Mott, F.L. Golden Multitudes.
Parrington, V.L. Main Currents in American Thought. 3 vols.
Pattee, F.L. The Development of the American Short Story.
Pizer, Donald. Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature. Rev. ed., 1984*.
Pizer, Donald, and Earl Harbert, ed. American Realists and Naturalists.
Reed, David. The Popular Magazine in Britain and the United States, 1880-1960 (1997).
Rees, Robert, and Earl Harbert. Fifteen American Authors Before 1900.
Rideout, Walter. The Radical Novel in the United States.
Rourke, Constance. American Humor: A Study of the National Character.
Saltzman, Jack, ed. American Studies: An Annotated Bibliography.
Saltzman, Jack. The Cambridge Handbook of American Literature (1986)*.
Showalter, Elaine. Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle.
Spiller, Robert. The Cycle of American Literature.
Spiller, Robert, and others. Literary History of the United States, 4th ed.* (see the history and the bibliographic supplement.)
Turner, Darwin. Afro-American Writers.
Wagenknecht, Edward. Cavalcade of the American Novel.
Walcutt, Charles C. American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream.
Woodress, James, ed. Eight American Authors.

4. Sample Response Essay Topics

1. Describe a scene that suggests who Steinbeck sees as responsible for helping the plight of the poor in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

2. How does Guterson, in *Snow Falling on Cedars*, demonstrate that ethnic communities may both suffer exclusion or isolation from the mainstream U.S. culture and yet also have communities which in some ways exclude or avoid others?

5. Final Response Essay *Please respond to the following topic in an essay of no more than two typed pages.*

During our symposia, we identified, among others, two possibly contradictory aspects of the American Dream: on one hand, financial and material security; on the other hand, the freedom to build one's life as one chooses, free of pressures from society, government, economic need, etc. But are these two sides of the dream compatible or not? Different writers have presented us with their own answers to this question.

Choose at least four of our assigned works. (You may supplement your response by reference to additional works including those reported upon in the panels). For each work, show how financial and/or material security is presented for the life of at least one major character or group of characters, and discuss how the personal freedom of the second aspect of the dream is preserved, compromised, or sacrificed for that security. Conclude with your own assessment of this dichotomy in the works you've discussed.

6. Symposium Summaries (Fall, 2002)

Symposium 1: What is the AAmerican Dream@?

1. Acceptance into an existing American culture. For earlier immigrants and some today, this means a "melting pot"—sharing common American values and the English language. For some recent

immigrants, this process means acceptance into the overall U. S. culture while at the same time retaining one=s native culture (and possibly language) rather than complete assimilation into the mainstream.

2. Hard work brings rewards--financial stability, health, education. But the good life isn't simply handed out. Has stagnation and laziness replaced hard work? The work ethic is part of the dream. The question of opportunity versus entitlement seems to be an issue.
3. The freedom and opportunity to build one's life as one chooses. This seems to be an alternative to cultures in which one is held in one's place by social pressures or by government policy.
4. Educational opportunity,
5. Participation in government.
6. Safety and security that will make the dream possible. The question is raised of whether we are now ready to sacrifice freedoms (such as speech) for that safety and security. A question is raised of whether suspicion has replaced cohesiveness since 9/11.
7. A society motivated by "wholesome" values. A place to raise families. Each generation should be able to do better than the preceding one.
8. General freedoms (speech, religion, political rights) important. Freedom a concern for new arrivals, but once they see that freedoms—especially religion and speech--exist, the dream changes to a material one.
9. Material gains and economic security. Most mentioned, not wealth, but the chance to earn a living and to be free from economic want. The security of house and home. Many mentions of a sort of material good life—house, car, material goods and a comfortable life; extreme wealth was not viewed as a major part of the dream. Initial motivations may be economic, but for some older Americans, more importance is attached to a comfortable retirement. For younger Americans, status symbols and material achievement seem important.
10. Freedom from ethnic and political differences that divide other countries.
11. A recent change is "increasing pressure to succeed, and to succeed on brilliant terms."
12. Questions remain. Is there inequality of opportunity? Are specific groups denied aspects of the dream? Is the dream centered on individual comfort? (No one mentioned improving humanity's lot, bettering society, helping others, changing the world.)

Symposium 2: What are the "American values" behind the dream?

1. Independence (received multiple mentions in varying contexts). Importance of privacy.
2. A desire and willingness to help others—perhaps a "feeling that we should help everybody." This quality seems more pronounced since 9/11. Exemplified by volunteer groups in society. But others raised the question of whether we are self-centered.
3. Tolerance (e.g., civil rights since 1950's) and diversity (multiple mentions).
4. Values of the Constitution and ill of Rights. Freedoms. (multiple mentions). Importance of the American justice system (innocent until proven guilty, right to fair treatment).
5. Importance of education.
6. Closeness of family—but one comment notes that those who've lived in other countries see more of this elsewhere, and suggest that in America our work may have more value, as if "our work defines us."
7. Power and a sense of world leadership.
8. Patriotism, especially after 9/11. (But recently has faded; do we now distrust one another?).
9. Security.

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